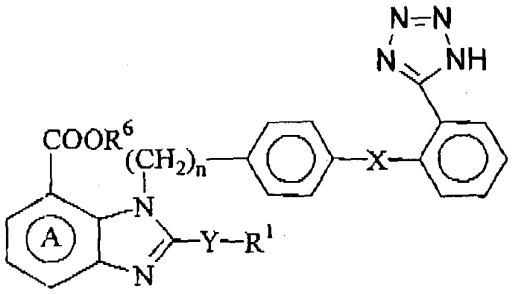
IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Canceled)

2. (Canceled)

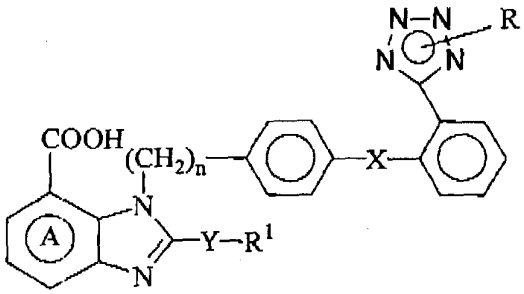
3. (Previously Presented) A method for producing a compound represented by the formula:



(Iq)

wherein the ring A is a benzene ring which may be substituted in addition to the group of -$COOR^6$ group; R^1 is hydrogen or an optionally substituted hydrocarbon residue; X is a direct bond or a spacer having an atomic length of two or less between the phenylene group and the phenyl group; Y is -O-, -S(O)m- or -$N(R^4)$- wherein m is an integer of 0, 1 or 2 and R^4 is hydrogen or an optionally substituted alkyl group; R^6 is a lower (C_{1-6}) alkyl optionally substituted with lower (C_{2-6}) alkanoyloxy, 1-lower (C_{1-6}) alkoxycarbonyloxy; n is an integer of 1 or 2; or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, which comprises;

(i) reacting a compound represented by the formula:



(Io)

wherein R is triphenylmethyl, 2-tetrahydropyranyl, methoxymethyl or ethoxy methyl, and the other symbols have the same meanings as defined above, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; with an alkylating agent to give a compound represented by the formula:

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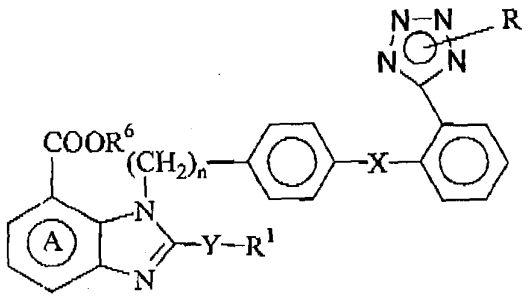

(Ip)

wherein each symbol has the same meaning as defined above; or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof; and then,

(ii) deprotecting the compound (Ip) or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein R^1 is an optionally substituted alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, cycloalkyl, aryl, or aralkyl group.

6. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein R^1 is an alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, or cycloalkyl group, which may be substituted with hydroxyl, an optionally substituted amino group, halogen or a lower (C_{1-4}) alkoxy group.

7. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein R^1 is a lower (C_{1-5}) alkyl or lower (C_{2-5}) alkenyl group optionally substituted with hydroxyl, an amino group, halogen or a lower (C_{1-4}) alkoxy group.

8. (Original) A method according to claim 6, wherein the alkyl is a lower alkyl group having 1 to about 8 carbon atoms, which may be straight or branched.

9. (Original) A method according to claim 8, wherein the lower alkyl group is unsubstituted or substituted with hydroxyl, an optionally substituted amino group, halogen or a lower (C_{1-4}) alkoxy group.

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10. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein R^1 is a lower alkyl group having 1 to about 8 carbon atoms.

11. (Original) A method according to claim 5, wherein the aryl group is phenyl which may be substituted with halogen, nitro, lower (C_{1-4}) alkoxy, or lower (C_{1-4}) alkyl.

12. (Original) A method according to claim 5, wherein the aralkyl group is phenyl-lower (C_{1-4}) alkyl which may be substituted with halogen, nitro, lower (C_{1-4}) alkoxy, or lower (C_{1-4}) alkyl.

13-21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein the ring A is a benzene ring which may contain, in addition to the -$COOR^6$ group, a substituent being selected from the group consisting of halogen nitro, cyano, optionally substituted amino, a group having the formula: -W-R^{13}

wherein W is a chemical bond, -O-, -S-, or $-\overset{\overset{O}{\|}}{C}-$,

and R^{13} is hydrogen or an optionally substituted lower alkyl group, a group having the formula: -$(CH_2)_p$-CO-D wherein D is hydrogen, hydroxyl, optionally substituted amino, or optionally substituted alkoxy, and p is 0 or 1, tetrazolyl optionally protected with an optionally substituted lower alkyl group or an acyl group, trifluoromethanesulfonic amide, phosphoric acid, or sulfonic acid.

23. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein the ring A is a benzene ring which contains no substitution in addition to the -$COOR^6$ group.

24. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein X is a chemical bond, lower (C_{1-4}) alkylene,

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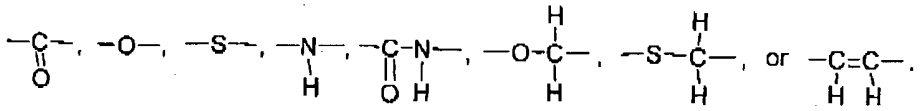

25. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~any one of claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein X is a chemical bond between the phenylene group and the phenyl group.

26. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein Y is -O-, $-SO_m-$ wherein m is 0, 1, or 2, or $-N(R^4)-$ wherein R^4 is hydrogen or an optionally substituted lower (C_{1-4}) alkyl group.

27. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein Y—R^1 is $-N(R^4)-R^1$ wherein R^1 and R^4 are taken together with the N atom attached thereto to form a heterocyclic ring.

28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein the alkylating reaction is conducted in the presence of a base.

30. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein the deprotecting reaction is conducted under acid condition.

31. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claims 3 or 4,~~ wherein the alkylating agent is a halide.

32. (Canceled)

33. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 3, ~~claim 3 or 4,~~ wherein the alkylating agent used in the reaction of compound (Io) with alkylating agent, is selected from cyclohexyl 1-iodoethyl carbonate, ethyl 1-iodoethyl carbonate, and pivaloyloxymethyl iodide.

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34. (Canceled)

35. (Original) A method for producing 1-(cyclohexyloxycarbonyloxy)ethyl 2-ethoxy-1-[[2'-(1H-tetrazol-5-yl)biphenyl-4-yl]methyl]benzimidazole-7-carboxylate or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, which comprises reacting 2-ethoxy-1-[[2'-(N-triphenylmethyltetrazol-5-yl)biphenyl-4-yl]methyl]benzimidazole-7-carboxylic acid or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof with an alkylating agent, and then subjecting the resulting compound to deprotecting reaction of the tetrazole group.

36. (Canceled)

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